KIRKBY STEPHEN
TOWN COUNCIL

Ordinary Meeting (Minutes)

Kirkby Stephen Town Council, Local Links, Vicarage Lane, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria, CA17 4QX
Tel. 017683 74854 | clerk@kirkby-stephen.com | Online www.kirkby-stephen.com

13 October 2026, Ordinary Meeting at Local Links at 18:45

Attending
Cllrs. P Richardson, A Birtles, A Waite (W&F), J Murray (W&F), S Lancaster, A Taylor, D Thornton, G Wren & C Barnes (Clerk).
Cllr. S Ellis joined the meeting as a councillor on co-option.

3 members of the public attending.

26/100 **Public Participation**
A representative of Encounter Eden CIC addressed the council about the King's Arms project and plans to establish an outdoor learning centre on land to the northwest of the town.

Following a tremendous community effort, the former King's Arms Ballroom reopened as the Loki Centre. Thanks were extended to the Fire Brigade, Rotarians and Young Farmers. A programme of light and classical music was planned for the Loki Centre.

Kirkby Stephen Primary School, Hilary Wilson and Chris Braithwaite had played key roles in establishing a community orchard on cricket ground land and proposing edible hedges.

Encounter Eden CIC had engaged with a Dark Skies event at Bowber Head.

On the fundraising front. Encounter Eden CIC had met with the Head of National Lottery Capital Funds (NLCF) and two officers had been appointed by NLCF to assist in the development of a funding bid an application was also in preparation for the Architectural Heritage Fund. It was gratifying to see that there was serious interest from serious funders. Encounter Eden was always looking to do better and welcomed any suggestions.

'These Changing Hills' exhibition at the Loki Centre had been particularly well supported.

Contact had been established with the Cumbria Wildlife Trust and the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

The Chairman thanked the speaker for their participation.

26/101 **Westmorland and Furness Councillors' Participation** App. 1
Cllrs Murray and Waite tabled a report (Appended)

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They noted that the government support grant for Westmorland and Furness had been cut by 30%. The consequence of this was that a maximum rise of 5% in council tax was once again inevitable and sadly in addition there would need to be cuts in service.

20 mph schemes were set to be approved at a meeting of the locality board tomorrow for Bolton, Kirkby Stephen, Maulds Meaburn and Newbiggin-on-Lune

Councillors Waite and Murray had examined the condition of pavements with the Highways Networks Manager who had graded defects to prioritise repairs.

Councillors Waite and Murray had attended the SEG meeting about the J38 Consultation which was on the agenda.

W&F had called another meeting about the proposed pump track and positive momentum was established although the Westgarth site had now been ruled out.

26/102 **Participation of the Police**
None

26/103 **Apologies & Welcomes**
3 Members of the public were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from a member of the public.

26/104 **Declarations & Dispensations**
Cllr Lancaster declared a non-pecuniary interest in her portfolio item having obtained a quote for the Animal Encounter.

26/105 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**
It was resolved that Press and Public would be excluded from discussion of (Agenda item 14) 'Staffing Matters' on the grounds that publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business.

26/106 **Minutes**
The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the following meetings as a true record and all committee recommendations were APPROVED.

1. Ordinary Meeting, 8 September 2026
2. Planning Committee, 17 September 2026
3. Planning Committee, 29 September 2026
4. Planning Committee, 8 October 2026 (cancelled for lack of business)

26/107 **Council Vacancy**
Two applications for the council vacancy had been received. Councillors preferred an application from Steve Ellis who edited the Community Newsletter, had attended meetings regularly and had outlined skills and experience in his expression of interest that the council felt would be beneficial to its work. Mr Ellis was co-opted with the UNANIMOUS support of councillors.

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The Clerk was instructed to write to the other candidate thanking him for his interest in the role and his offer of service to the community.

Steve Ellis signed the 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office' and joined the council.

26/108 **IT Policy & Website**

A draft IT policy and report had been tabled and discussed at the previous ordinary meeting and the general approach had been approved for costings. That report and its recommendations had been attached to the agenda.

1. Changes were needed to the existing website and IT policies to ensure that Assertion 10 of the Annual Governance Statement could be answered with a 'yes'.
2. Currently the Town Council's website www.kirkby-stephen.com, last reworked in 2018, had 8 main menu items and 49 sub menu items many of which are out of date, contain broken links or obsolete information. The website is dated with some content going back to 2009 and does not reflect current browsing practices. Much of the material hosted on the site such as accommodation listings would sit better on the Upper Eden Visitor Website or on the History Society website and it was proposed to provide the existing website to the UEVIC together with a service to update and maintain it.
3. Councillors APPROVED the recommendation that the council establishes a new 'gov.uk' website that meets current simpler expectations of a Local Council website, which will pass external audit without qualification and conform to an appropriate accessibility standard.
4. The associated IT Policy which would be presented to a future meeting would oblige councillors to use a gov.uk email for council business and to avoid the use of personal emails for council business.
5. At the previous meeting councillors had AGREED to the general principle and the clerk had been authorised to obtain costs for a worked-up report.
6. Indicative costings had been presented by the councils existing provider and included with the agenda as follows:

1	Website design and build (new town council site)	Design and Development process Create mock-ups for the new .gov.uk website for approval Once approved, build the new website and migrate URLs and SEO data. Stage the website on a temporary URL ready for the manual process of updating and adding content.	£3150.00
2	Refresh kirkby-stephen. com	Light refresh for kirkby-stephen.com - design to suit the new emphasis on business and tourist information.	£1975.00
3	Content migration	Estimated costs for content migration (including up to 5 years of documents)	£1330.00
4	Hosting	New Town Council Website. Hosting can continue as currently, or a dedicated solution could be quoted for if required	£240.00 (annual cost)

5	Hosting	New Kirkby Stephen.com website	£240.00 (annual cost)

1. Councillors APPROVED expenditure as follows 1, 3, (4&5) so that the gov.uk site could be progressed.
2. It was AGREED that Standing Orders would be waived on the Clerk's recommendation that using the existing service provider would be more cost efficient than contracting another provider, place a lower burden on staff capacity and mitigate the risk of data loss.
3. The Upper Eden CIC would meet tomorrow evening and consider the offer of transfer of www.kirkby-stephen.com and a contribution to the costs. The matter would come back to the council.
4. The Customer Services Assistant would continue to support the maintenance of the website as part of their role as a means of the council supporting the Upper Eden CIC.
5. £2,500 had been committed to the website in the budget for the year and it was AGREED that any excess expenditure would be funded by a reduction of the general reserves.

26/109 **BT Openreach (Pole at Franks Bridge)**

Openreach had written to the Town Council admitting culpability over the installation of a pole at Franks Bridge without the Town Council's permission as owner, planning consent or Natural England consent.

The clerk had met with and discussed the matter with a BT surveyor on a 'without prejudice' basis on the 1 October to establish whether there was a practical solution - it had been established that…

- BT had a duct under the river linked to an inspection chamber on the ford road off Mellbecks. The surveyor had suggested that this duct could be reinspected as a possible alternative means of carrying cabling but had said that the duct was damaged/blocked and could not be reused - he had said that he would recommend the reinspection of the duct to establish the viability of reusing it as an option but was not optimistic about this.
- The clerk had suggested that a better screened location could be found for a pole and the surveyor confirmed that the pole could be moved up to 60 metres from its current location.
- On that basis a draft wayleave agreement for the pole and cabling had been prepared by BT and circulated to councillors showing an alternative location close to riverbank some distance from Franks Bridge that would be screened by trees.

Councillors had seen correspondence from the MP Tim Farron & Friends of the Lake District (FOLD) on the matter - this last is appended. App. 2

FOLD had raised issues regarding the requirement for the pole to have planning consent because Franks Bridge is a Grade 2 listed structure and sits within the conservation area. They had also highlighted that Natural England's consent would be required in respect of the SSSI and SAC.

The Council expressed a strong preference for the reuse of the duct under the river noting that Fold has also suggested the use of a satellite. Both these options would avoid any visual intrusion.

A councillor had been advised by the planning authority that the costs of planning enforcement in relation to an unsuccessful retrospective planning permission would fall on the council as landowners. They felt it likely that any application for planning consent would attract local objectors.

The meeting was also attended by the council's grounds maintenance contractor who had identified the following works as being necessary to re-establish the sward and path to Hartley which had been damaged by the installers for which he had supplied a quote of £1150 as follows:

- Full rake and screen the affected area removing all the exposed stones and rocks
- Apply appropriately 2 tons of topsoil
- Full turf roll with vibration roller to compact the area back down and application of grass seed.

The council's first preference was for the reuse of the duct. If this were not possible it was AGREED that prior to accepting any wayleave agreement that the council would require BT Openreach to obtain permissions or demonstrate that permissions were not required as follows:

1. Planning Consent.
2. Natural England's Consent.
3. In addition, BT Openreach would reinstate the ground to the specification provided by the council's contractor and to their satisfaction.

26/110 **National Highways (J38 risk of closure)**

Following a recent Stakeholder Engagement Meeting with National Highways at Tebay Club attended by the Chairman, Clerk and Cllrs Murray and Waite along with representatives of other local organisations concerns were expressed that the temporary slip road option might not be considered.

National Highways revealed that three options regarding the roadwork arrangements would be announced in February and then put out for a seven-week consultation period. No guarantee was made that any of the options would include a slip road.

Independent consultants Atkins had been engaged to advise National Highways. Engineers BWB engaged by Westmorland Ltd. and Lyon had been involved in preparatory 'optioneering'.

Councillors anticipated that a further demonstration of the communities resolve on this issue should be staged in January ahead of the publication of the 3 Options to have any chance to affect the outcome of that process by ensuring that an option to maintain the junction as open throughout the works was included. The Chairman would lead on this.

26/111 **Clerk's Report**

The clerk's report was taken as read and APPROVED.
Two matters were highlighted:

1. 14 October 'Planting for Pollinators' session at Edensyde 14:00.
2. Concern that the HR Audit actions were not completed by the council's adviser a meeting was set up for 27 October 2026 to discuss progress.

26/112.1 **Portfolios | Community Planning**

Cllr Birtles noted that a meeting of the Visitor Information Centre Volunteers and UECIC would take place tomorrow. The council's proposals for the Kirkby-Stephen.com website would be discussed. It was expected that council staff would keep the site updated for the CIC.

26/112.2 **Portfolios | Highways**

Councillors discussed a response to Highways proposals to stop up parking bays outside the Pennine Hotel with bollards.
Councillors Noted: Pedestrian Safety Concerns, Loss of Parking Space Amenity, the needs of Local Business to have a loading area.
Also, that the inclusion of an off-road bus stop proposed by the council had been assessed as incompatible with applicable design codes.

Councillors suggested that Highways consult on the idea of a raised kerb like those outside Kirkby Club with a loading bay pull in and no bollards. Councillors AGREED with Cllr Murray proposal that the Town Council ask for pull-in parking bays at the roadside and for the footway to be diverted behind these bays

26/112.3 **Portfolios | Economy and Community**

Councillors APPROVED £520 to fund an animal encounter at the Xmas Lights switch on with costs to be defrayed from sponsorship and fundraising with the remainder contributed from the Chairman's fund.

26/112.4 **Portfolios | Property and Open Spaces**

Councillors proposed a vote of thanks to VolkerRail for the work of their social value volunteers on the 10 September 2026 in tidying up the town.
Tree risk reports for the council's land at Hills Bottom and Stenkrith were noted.
Councillors were dismayed to read the surveyors comments regarding the trees at Franks Bridge that had been subject to bark stripping during the Summer and noted that the large beech in Stenkrith Park affected by Brittle Cinder Fungus had been evaluated as not requiring felling/significant works.
The remaining reports would be presented to the next meeting with a five year works schedule.

26/112.5 **Portfolios | Children and Young People**

Cllr Murray speaking on behalf of the Evergreen Trustees hoped to be able to make an announcement soon as to a new provider/tenant and arrangements for the operation of the building.

26/113.6 **Portfolios | Communication and Engagement**

The Chairman suggested that this becomes Steve Ellis' 'portfolio'.

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26/113.1 **Finance**

A schedule of transfers receipts and payments up to the end of September 2026 was APPROVED. Together with forward approval 'in principle' of regular/budgeted payments, Salaries, PAYE & NIC.

26/113.2 **Finance**

A bank reconciliation to the end of September 2026 with a closing balance of £172,281.73 was APPROVED.

26/113.3 **Finance**

The second quarter budget monitor was being prepared and would be presented to the next meeting.

26/114.1 **External Audit**

The report and certificate of the External Auditor was noted as follows:
'On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with the Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.'
The auditor had noted an incorrect date on the notice of public rights and had made two observations regarding the internal auditor's report which the Clerk would liaise with them over.

26/114.2 **External Audit**

The Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been posted on the 1 October 2026.

26/115 **Next Meetings**

1. 29 October 2026 Planning Cttee
2. 5 November 2026 Planning Cttee
3. 10 November 2026 Ordinary Meeting
4. 16 November 2026 Finance Cttee
5. 26 November 2026 Planning Cttee
6. 3 December 2026 Planning Cttee

26/116 **Confidential Minute (Staffing Matters)**

<ends 21:00>

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Chairman

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Appendix 1

October 2026, Westmorland and Furness Councillors' report to Kirkby Stephen Town Council

1. **Budget discussions** – clearly the biggest discussion presently is about budget. The government grant to W&F is being reduced by over 30% and this translates into tens of millions of savings being needed in recurrent expenditure over the next three years. While the most immediate effect on residents will be the inevitable 5% Council Tax rise, it is also only fair to warn that some hard decisions are on their way. In many areas, if we don't get a specific grant (e.g. for buses or highways) and it isn't statutory, it is under threat. We will be getting the long list at Cabinet later this month.
2. **20 mph zones** – Eden Locality Board is meeting on October 14th with a recommendation from officers, following the formal consultation, to approve 20mph zones in Bolton, Kirkby Stephen, Maudes Meaburn and Newbiggin-on-Lune.
3. **Pavements** - Adrian and John met with John Banks, Area Highways lead, to view and discuss the condition of pavements in town. JB gave us a list of about a dozen faults that need urgent attention, which will happen; and a further list of about a dozen that don't meet criteria (20mm) but will be monitored. In conversation as we walked around the town, we were able point out other issues such as drains, parking and pinch-points. JB also pointed out some of the limitations he works under. There are stretches of pavement that would require traffic control to repair, and, through the narrowest sections, potentially road closures!
4. **Junction 38** – As well as Adrian and I, Paul attended the latest engagement meeting in Tebay. While there was plenty of coverage of old ground, they message is that preparatory works continue while they complete a new round of 'optioneering'. From this there will be a seven-week consultation starting in February. It is crucial that we get as many as possible to take part in this, emphasising impacts on local communities. The National Highways team freely admitted that their overall strategic view doesn't 'see' the more local impact on schools, colleges, farmers, tourists, local businesses or commuting patterns. Interestingly, they did say data from incidents on the M6 (and A66) are fed into their traffic models.
5. **Care Homes** – there was an extensive (and intensive) consultation on the future of two Care Homes, one in Alston and one in Windermere. The final decision is due on 27th October.
6. **Appleby Horse Fair** – planning continues for next year's fair. There will be the usual pre- and post-meetings, but likely to follow the new 'parents evening' style. Any further feedback from us to the MASCG will have more effect sooner rather than later.
7. **New Wards for 2027** – first just a reminder that the May 2027 W&F election here will be for a two-member Kirkby Stephen and Brough ward. Looking west we will keep Ravenstonedale and Newbiggin but lose Tebay and Orton. Looking east and north we gain not just Brough but Stainmore and Warcop. The election day is shared with the first Cumbria Mayoral election, as well as town and parish council elections. There is a consultation out on how the costs of the election can be shared by the Cumbria Combined Authority, W&F and towns/parishes where there is an election.

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Chairman's Initials/Date

Appendix 2
Correspondence from Friends of the Lake District

Friends of the Lake District

Friends of the Lake District, Murley Moss,
Oxenholme Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7SS
Telephone: 01539 720788 Email: info@fld.org.uk
www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk

Openreach Pole Objection Team
2nd Floor, the Plaza
100 Old Street
Liverpool
L3 9QL

23rd September 2026

Dear Sir or Madam

FLD objection to the erection of a broadband pole by Openreach at Frank's Bridge, Kirkby Stephen

Friends of the Lake District, as a landscape charity for Cumbria, has campaigned for the removal of overhead wires since it was established in 1934. Just one example of this is where we work closely with SP Electricity North West to underground electricity poles in protected landscapes across Cumbria.

In addition to our general presumption against above ground infrastructure for its landscape impact, there are a multitude of site-specific reasons why we object to the erection of a broadband pole by Openreach at Frank's Bridge in Kirkby Stephen.

Heritage

Frank's Bridge is a Grade II listed structure, being an historic seventeenth century pack horse bridge. With the broadband pole being just 10m from the bridge itself, the pole negatively impacts both how this heritage feature is viewed by users and its wider riverside setting. For these reasons, the broadband pole is likely to need the consent of the Local Planning Authority, Westmorland and Furness Council.

And Frank's Bridge and adjoining banks fall within Kirkby Stephen's designated Conservation Area. This means that any development must strictly preserve or enhance the historic, architectural and visual townscape. We believe that Openreach's broadband pole runs counter to this. So again, you should have contacted the Local Planning Authority, Westmorland and Furness Council, prior to the pole's installation.

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Biodiversity

Your broadband pole is also within 15m of River Eden, a SSSI and SAC. Works on protected sites are extremely restricted, so it is likely that you will need consent from Natural England for installing a broadband pole.

Recreation and access

This beautiful historic bridge is enjoyed by many walkers on the popular Coast to Coast, newly opened this year as a National Trail. They use this bridge to cross River Eden on leaving Kirkby Stephen and before approaching Nine Standards Rigg. It is also on the regional walk from Skipton to Penrith of Lady Clifford Way. It is a picture-perfect spot, now marred by an ugly broadband pole and associated wires.

And in the most recent Local Plan for this area of Cumbria, the land running along the river corridor is designated as a public open space. Local planning policies protect these pockets from urban development to retain the landscape character of the town. Another reason why a broadband pole should not have been erected in this location. On a site visit, local residents told me how upset they are that a local green space, that they use regularly, has been harmed in this way.

Landowner permission needed

There has been so much anger and concern from residents to MPs about unsightly broadband poles across England that last year the House of Commons library produced a research briefing to help MPs advise their constituents. It says very clearly that "companies need landowner's permission to install telegraph poles on private or public land." Yet we have been told by Kirkby Stephen town council, who own this green space, that Openreach did not obtain their permission to erect this broadband pole near Frank's Bridge. This is unacceptable.

Alternative to above ground broadband pole

Finally, there is an alternative - to installing an above ground broadband pole - of exploring the use of satellite on a nearby building in order to provide broadband. We are aware of this being done on some farms and village halls in Cumbria, such as at Buttermere.

We really hope therefore that you will address our multiple concerns about your broadband pole in this beautiful place by removing it and instead use a different way of offering digital connectivity to your customers.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted]

Policy Officer

Registered charity No. 1100759 Registered in England and Wales, Company No. 487836

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If you would like to change the way we communicate with you,

please call 01539 720788 or email info@fld.org.uk

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