

1.WAFC Lighting Policy (Teams Presentation) 30.6.25

Report by Michael Hanley.

Scott McLauchlan (SML, Lead Lighting Engineer): When I started with WAFC the lighting policy was all over the place. There was a lot of difference between the different areas. My job was to try and harmonise things. There had been four different lighting policies (Eden, South Lakes, Barrow District Councils and Cumbria County Council).

Eden was the hardest to deal with. About 2018, Eden District Council (EDC) decided to devolve all footway (footpath) lighting to parish councils. Some took it on, some didn't. 762 lights stayed with the council, 540 were looked after by parish councils. There were lots of complaints about what was happening. Residents were asking why the lights were not being maintained. With regard to highway (road) lighting Eden had 3709 units, South Lakes 8516 and Barrow 8736. These were on main roads and housing estates.

Footway lighting is less than 4 metres in height with at least 50 yards between units. Highway lighting is any other lighting.

Cumbria County Council maintained the highway (road) lighting (20,961 units), EDC the footway lighting (1735 units which had not been devolved, 775 devolved units were looked after by town and parish councils). Some parishes did not want to take on responsibility for the lights.

We asked parish councils whether they want to give back lighting responsibility to WAFC. 37 out of 57 PCs wanted to return lighting to WAFC. Our aim is to have one lighting authority. It is easier to administer with just one organisation in charge. Also we wanted to stop decommissioning of lights (switching them off). We will try to fix lights instead of abandoning them.

We are heavily involved with the Dark Skies Scheme. We can install lights with the latest technology. We are trying to get all new units connected to a central control. I can dim or switch off individual lights (via my computer). There will be no charge to PCs for the electricity or maintenance. PCs can still be the owners and act as their own lighting authority but they would have to pay for the energy and maintenance. The new policy has been a success. There has to be legal agreements transferring ownership back from the PCs.

M Hanley (MH, L): Why did EDC want to hand over lighting to the PCs? Was it a cost cutting exercise? I would have thought that all PCs would not want this responsibility.

M Eyles (ME, LD): The reason was that an Electricity North West worker had an accident and an order was issued for EDC to take on the lights. The Executive (cabinet of EDC) thought they couldn't take on this responsibility.

SML: It was a BT engineer who got an electric shock, thinking it was a BT pole (a BT engineer died by electrocution in 2011 due to the lights being attached to the ENW electricity poles. The lights would be removed when the pole was to be replaced as the safety of third party workers could not be guaranteed. The cost of a new pole, for a street light, would be about £1500 and fall on the local parish council). As for the 20 PCs who haven't come back to us, they may not have made a decision yet. We expect another 10 to ask that their lights come back to WAFC, that is 95% of PCs to hand them back.

N McCall (NMC, LD): Asked about dimming of lights.

SML: You can programme each unit individually. A request can be made for increased lighting in an area.

A. Connell (AC, LD): Thank you for this rational approach. The Eden policy was obsessed with not raising council tax.

S Castle-Clark (SCC): Some early adopters actually went for Victorian lamp posts. They are concerned that their investment might be wasted.

SML: We wouldn't change a heritage lamp post back to a modern one. There are some of these in Sedburgh and Alston.

SCC: You might let some PCs know this. Some PCs actually do want to keep their lighting.

2. Family Hubs

Lorraine Hopkins (LH, Senior Manager, Family Help and Family Hubs):

Over the last two years a lot of work has been done on Family Hubs. This started in Barrow with the Family Help Service. We are currently training new staff. In Eden the service was run by Barnardos. This has been transferred to WAFC.

463 young people were surveyed and the most important thing for them was to feel safe in their local area (87%).

There is an ongoing roll-out of Family Hubs in other areas (after Barrow). We need to review Childrens Centres (fore-runners of Family Hubs).

Sharon Corbridge (SC): Family Hubs (FH) can be accessed by telephone or on-line. The first FH was launched in Barrow in September 2023. Barnardos provided a Child and Family Support Service in Eden. This service was transferred to WAFC on 1.4.25. Buildings across Eden were previously badged as Childrens Centres are now Family Hubs. We are learning from our experience in Barrow. We have asked what has worked well and are the locations in the right place? There are 24 services provided by these hubs including birth registration, debt and welfare service, help for those experiencing domestic abuse, health visiting and infant feeding support.

What is well provided for in Eden?: Mental Health, Domestic Abuse, Poverty Support and SEND (support of children with special needs such as autism) and poverty support. There is a strong sense of community-oriented support (churches, schools etc). There are four Childrens Centres (FHs): Penrith, Appleby, Kirkby Stephen and Alston. There have been suggestions for others at Shap, Tebay, Lazonby/Kirkoswald and Glenridding.

Publicity has been made through Facebook, on-line, in schools and health visitor clinics. The contact email is edenfamilyhubs@westmorlandandfurness.giv.uk.

M Hanley (MH, L): Asked about the dearth of health visitors (compared to 20 years ago) and asked where the FH will be in Alston.

LH: It will be in the school (Samuel King Primary and Secondary School).

MH: There is a lot of room at the community hospital and the GP surgery is attached to this building. In the past all the health visitor activities were based at the surgery and hospital, why have you moved these to the school? Having these services close to the surgery improves communication, as the GPs and practice nurses come across the problems that the FHs deal with on a daily basis.

A Connell (AC, LD): Is this service for all families, not just the "problem" ones?

LH: Yes, the service is for all families.