

STOP SPEEDING! CAMPAIGN

NOTES from Public Meeting: Monday 16th February 2015 commencing 6:30pm

Those present: R Burn, K Cairns (NCC County Cllr), J Porksen, 46 members of the public, police representative Paul Sykes

Robbie Burn thanked all for attending, and it was proven by the turnout public feeling is high regarding A697 safety.

All aware of problems regarding A697 generally, and within the last five years five articulated wagons had overturned; there are with speeding issues; vehicles overtaking outside garage and within 30mph; and HGV's overtaking on bends. Problems had originally been reported in Hedgeley Parish Plan 2005, and its review in 2009. Two speed surveys taken in 2009/2010 by roads initiative, who look at designated sites and task camera plan. NCC would carry out speed survey, and if results show 85% of vehicles exceeding speed limit NCC would pass findings to camera van team. Speed survey had taken place last year, and various meetings having followed. PC had asked for speed camera, gateways to village (stone plinths), pedestrian crossing, roundabout, safety islands in middle of road, white lines to prevent overtaking, and existing road markings to be reinstated, however NCC had turned down every single request, excepting repainting road signs. Interactive signs had been paid for from the late J Taylors NCC small funding scheme, however police do not enforce speeding. The last survey had found 2000 vehicles speeding in a 7 day period, with 61mph recorded within 30mph zone, and 71pmh recorded within 40mph zone. Having approached NCC/police for help, now seem to have been forgotten about, and where do we go now to ensure people in village and surrounding areas are safe, with further problems envisaged due to forthcoming upgrade of A1.

Cost of speed camera in region of £25K, however the issue being cost of administration in dealing with cameras, regulations in place to only fit cameras after a certain amount of fatal accidents, with speed having to be a factor in fatalities. A parishioner commented with respect, he suggested strongly that speeding is a problem, but believed bad driving is a major factor. Average speed camera thought to be more beneficial, as at Longframlington, as this could change behaviour. Vibrations of dwellings reported when speeding wagons pass through village, if wagons go through at 30mph homes don't shake, however at higher speeds they do. Parishioners are nervous about walking through village, and bridge widening an option for safety.

General view is A697 one of the most hazardous roads in the county, with stretch between Powburn and Shawdon extremely dangerous, however with route the shortest way to Edinburgh from Morpeth, and convenient for HGV's. Parishioner suggested weight restrictions are put on road if wanting to keep HGV's off road, however it is the speed of HGV's, not the fact they use the road. Heather Cairns, NCC County Cllr suggested options are requested on NCC LTP plan by Parish Council, however every single request had been turned down, and requests are made each year. Heather suggested the way forward would be only making one request each year. Richard Poppleton, as previous Clerk to PC, confirmed transport related issues were made each year, which did include issues relating to A697, and the number of occasions when anything positive emerges from NCC LTP is tiny, however if local County Cllr follows up request, could be positive outcome. Have empirical evidence 2000 vehicles a week are speeding, which the safer road initiative need to action.

Kate Cairns became County Cllr July 2014, and made assurances there is nobody more passionate on road safety issues and will fight for everything to make the village safer. Kate had attended NCC meeting to discuss consultant's report to see what measures need to be put in place to reduce risk. 5 priority areas, and 3 further super priority areas had been earmarked, however Powburn not within these areas, but in the medium priority area, with interventions proposed being gateways into village, moving 30mph signs back, addressing street lighting provision, safety barriers, refreshing road markings and bend warning signs. General view nothing radical in report, covering signage, lining, speed reduction, average speed cameras, physical changes to route geometry, and addressing excessive HGV related collisions. NCC is doing something, but could be doing a lot more, if speeding can be actioned will be at least half way there.

Parishioner reported road safe when travelling at 60mph, but recent years suggest it is commercial vehicles that are speeding. If 3 sections of A697 between Morpeth and Scottish border declared higher priority than Powburn, could we

know where these are? It was reported Linden Hall and Heighley Gate are two areas. Powburn the only village without a speed camera, however funding for other areas had come from private sources. Regarding the last five HGV's overturned, 4 had been British, and one Scottish driven by Romanians. Many foreign wagons do travel on A697, due to their sat navs. Speeding initiative will have report from NCC meeting, stating speed measure enforcement is recommended, Kate Cairns to take forward and push for maximum enforcement. Consultant had said Powburn not priority as no accidents had occurred there. It was argued the perception of safety as important as statistics, and it seems before A1 dualling works commence, action needs to be taken, and there is a sense of urgency for A697. Report does say 28% of recorded collisions are HGV's which only make up 5.2% of the traffic volume. HGV carrying radioactive waste which had overturned near to Bridge of Aln had been reported at previous PC meeting, and if travelling on A1 it would not have travelled through any villages.

One parishioners view being the Increase of traffic at Moor house crossroads had not resulted in a traffic accident since Cragend land slip, and does this not prove it is careless driving that causes accidents.

Question asked of other avenues that can be explored. J Porksen said it is the responsibility of NCC to ensure A697 is safe, but it is a constant battle to move up the priority list, and now is the right time to push for action with A1 to be duelled, and Powburn needs to be safe before diversions occur. J Porksen had spoken to Director of Highways, and whatever happens in the planning process there is a need to ensure diversionary routes are safe, key is any works that need doing, and cross country diversionary routes are not made for cars never mind wagons. This is an opportunity to put pressure on relevant agencies. There is an issue with pavements on Powburn bridge when HGV's come over they naturally go to l/h side, ideal option would be average speed camera to change behaviour, and new pole on bridge had already been damaged by traffic. Highways have to ensure traffic functions, the increase of traffic could be two/threefold, surely Highways should invest for safety reasons.

Discussion had all been about reducing speed, one parishioners tending to disagree with this, nothing about structural work. Crash barriers have adverse effect, cars bounce off these and into oncoming traffic, they are designed to hold vehicle in, but no way a barrier could hold an HGV. Overhanging branches do cause problems near to Thrunton brickworks. Whenever an accident occurs, diversionary routes are not to a satisfactory condition, with these roads damaging farm vehicles.

Possibility of double white lines to stop overtaking in Powburn, however NCC had said road not wide enough for such lines. Rough surfacing at 30mph signage had increased noise, and should have been placed further along.

Unmarked police signs in other areas, however a police car a bigger deterrent.

Police asked for their comments, Paul Sykes reported he had visited Powburn recently and had not caught anybody speeding, however police car had been parked up. Camera van does have an effect if traffic local, however with fixed speed cameras, vehicles brake and then speed up again, 30mph should be beyond village, with 40mph abolished and average speed cameras do reduce speed. .

There are two main issues, one being money, and one on the insistence on referring to a set of regulations on what determines whether something can happen. This insistence should be attacked, as the parish deserves more than this. Regulations quoted by NCC being Road Traffic Act 1968.

Kate Cairns quoted contributory factors to accidents, the majority being down to driver error, in reality these errors need to be managed , therefore designs are made so people make small mistakes, however no major engineering works proposed.

It would help if Parish Council's joined together and wrote in regarding A1 duelling. A cluster of Glanton, Whittingham, Hedgeley and Edlingham had met, photographed areas etc. Barry Rowlands NCC being the contact to write to regarding forthcoming A1 upgrading.

Interested persons can leave email address with Robbie Burn, with review of meeting to be displayed locally.

Bypass would solve the problem, with plans put in 25 years ago, however housing estate then built.