

PARRETT & AXE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting to discuss A356 Road Issues held on Wednesday 20th February 2013, at 6.30pm, in South Perrott Village Hall

Present: Cllrs Mike Johnson (Chairman), Kate Organ (Vice-Chairman), Sue Coutanche, Liz Fray and Anita Legg. Also in attendance: County Cllr Rebecca Knox, District Cllr Janet Page, clerk Angela Gillingham and 35 residents.

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Simmons, District Cllr Caroline Payne and Roger Legg.

The Chairman opened the meeting by asking residents to raise issues relating to the A356 in South Perrott and the proposed Variable Message Signs (VMS). He explained that the signs would be triggered by a large vehicle, in order to make an oncoming large vehicle aware that one was already in the narrow section by Swing Gate Cottage. If the signs were positioned opposite Hill Farm and Rowan Tree Cottage, it would take a vehicle approximately one minute to travel between the two signs.

Residents raised the following points –

- VMS needs refinement, giving priority to traffic from Dorchester direction.
- Picket Lane is not signposted as a junction from either direction.
- The proposed VMS at Rowan Tree Cottage is too far up the hill from the centre of the village.
- The signs are only needed because the initial road scheme was put in.
- There is increased traffic because of the closure of Beaminster Tunnel.
- There is a greater volume of traffic now than 10 years ago.
- Lorries back up and reverse into Picket Lane because they cannot pass each other in the narrow section. This is highly dangerous for pedestrians.
- The Parish Council should write to the directors of the companies whose lorries speed through the village.
- Can available money be used to pay for alternative traffic calming, e.g. 30mph flashing signs?
- For at least 20 years issues of traffic volume and speed have been raised at Parish Council and village meetings. We now have the opportunity to do something, and the signs could be removed, reprogrammed or repositioned later if necessary.
- It has never been possible for two large vehicles to pass each other in the narrow section.
- Concern about the size of the solar panels needed to power the VMS.
- The signs will spoil the appearance of a pretty Dorset village. If a sign is positioned in The Pound it will ruin the centre of the village and if at each end of the village, it will spoil the approaches to the village.

- If traffic was limited to 20mph then vehicles would have time to see each other and stop.
- Fast vehicles are cars and vans, not HGVs.

County Cllr Rebecca Knox explained that because of the closure of the Beaminster tunnel there is more traffic through the village. There is emergency tunnel money available in this financial year to alleviate traffic problems in the surrounding villages and it was suggested last October that VMS could be an emergency solution to the problems in South Perrott. Cllr Knox did not know if the money could be reallocated to another traffic calming scheme. She advised that the County Council was planning to review speed limits on rural roads later this year. She warned that it can take many years for a village to get a 30mph speed limit reduced to 20mph. It might be possible to have vehicle-activated 30mph signs in South Perrott.

Residents raised further points –

- Flashing speed signs will not help traffic jams in the narrow section.
- Do we need an evaluation of the whole road scheme, instead of chipping away at aspects of it?
- In 40 years there have been only two minor accidents involving HGVs in the narrow section.
- Since the road scheme was put in, 8 cars have been damaged on the high kerb outside Sarum.
- The owners of Swing Gate Cottage and Bakers Arms are disturbed by the noise of traffic driving over the raised kerbs and would like the kerbstones removed and replaced with a white line.

The Chairman invited residents to vote on the following proposals –

The installation of Variable Message Signs opposite Hill Farm and Rowan Tree Cottage properties

In favour: 3
Against: Overwhelming majority

In principle, the installation of flashing 30mph signs opposite Hill Farm and Rowan Tree Cottage properties

In favour: 14
Against: 19

In principle, the removal of the crossings and the replacement of the kerbstones alongside footways with something less obtrusive but retaining the delineated area of footway

In favour: Overwhelming majority
Against: 3

Further issues –

Refurbishment of The Pound - In response to a comment that part of the original road scheme was to enhance The Pound, but there has been no improvement, Cllr Kate Organ advised that discussions had been held at the previous two parish council meetings and two quotes had been obtained for building the stone planter and laying paving. A contractor has been engaged and will

shortly begin the work. Bob Buckland has bought the new seat and the old unsafe one has been removed. The two tyres used as planters last year were a temporary measure only.

Speedwatch - In response to a question regarding Speedwatch, County Cllr Rebecca Knox advised that PCSO Alex Bishop is seeing if a pilot of the proposed volunteer speedwatch might be implemented, based in Beaminster, and Alex will be talking to potential volunteers in Beaminster. Cllr Knox will provide some information on the project to assess whether South Perrott is interested, either to think about it for the future or if interested now to come along to Alex's first talk to find out more. Information on this could go in the 'Pump & Pound' newsletter. Cllr Knox suggested that the parish council, with local help, might suggest to Alex and his local team, the best place to do some speed testing now.

Lecher Lane junction – The owner of Shire Cottage advised that HGVs travelling from Crewkerne and turning into Lecher Lane have damaged the roof of his property four times in 15 years. The vehicles are taking no notice of the “unsuitable for HGVs” signs. Other remedial measures had not been implemented. The clerk to chase Highways. *Action: Mrs Gillingham*

The Chairman drew the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Signed

Date