

REPORT TO NEWTON POPPLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL

CLLR JESS BAILEY, DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL, OTTER VALLEY WARD

JULY 2021

DOUBLE WHITE LINES ON FOUR ELMS HILL: URGENT ACTION NEEDED, COMMITTEE AGREES

Over two years ago it was agreed by Devon County Council that double white lines were needed to improve road safety at the notorious accident black spot at Four Elms Hill on the A3052 between Newton Poppleford and the Bowd.

When, earlier this month, a completely different scheme of lining from the one agreed was introduced, it was clear that something had gone wrong.

In order to make progress in resolving this issue, I called for an item on this matter to be brought to the Highways and Traffic Order Committee at Devon County Council on Friday 23rd July. At the committee, Cllrs Burhop and Ranger, who have been campaigning for this improvement for years, expressed their frustration at the situation and called for urgent rectification.

Devon County Council officers provided a verbal report to the committee and suggested various safety audits were carried out and this item be brought back to the next committee meeting (November) for next steps to be considered.

Waiting until November for a report is not acceptable. I spoke of the need for urgent action and was pleased to be supported by many of my County Council colleagues on the committee who, like me, expressed the view that we need this to be resolved without delay.

I hope and expect the repainting to take place as a matter of urgency and as ward member shall be monitoring progress very closely.

FOOTPATH ONE

I had a productive meeting with footpath warden Ted Swan and DCC public rights of way officer Emma Hellier this month to consider the actions required to make footpath one a more user-friendly footpath. There are a number of steps which need to be taken prior to improving the surface. Emma is proposing to remove the kissing gate at the King Alfred Way end of the footpath on the basis that it is not believed to be serving any useful purpose. Emma intends to carry out investigations in relation to several sections of the path, firstly around the oak tree and secondly at a narrow stretch between the Oak Tree and School Lane.

Although not in the parish of Newton Poppleford I know that footpath forty-six (near Tipton St John) remains a concern and a meeting was recently scheduled with members of Ottery St Mary Town Council and members of the DCC public rights of way team. This unfortunately has been postponed due to being very overgrown and I am now waiting for a further update on when the meeting can take place.

20 MPH SPEED LIMIT

At Devon County Council's full council meeting on 22nd July, I submitted a formal question to Cllr Hughes in relation to 20mph speed limits. I then followed this up with a supplemental question.

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BAILEY Re: 20mph speed limits

This year the UN Global Road Safety Week calls for policy makers to act urgently to implement low speed streets worldwide for people and planet, specifically 20mph limits. "On our streets, worldwide, where we walk, play and live, we call for action on speed. Low speed, liveable streets are essential and urgent".

The UN is calling on policy makers to sign up to an open letter (copy attached) which recognizes that this is an urgent issue; urgent because low speeds saves lives; urgent for public health; urgent for global goals and our climate; urgent for social and racial equality and urgent for our children and youth and vital for their wellbeing. Yet to my communities in the Otter Valley there appears to be a lack of urgency on the part of Devon County Council in dealing with this important issue.

The communities of Ottery St Mary, Newton Poppleford, Otterton and Colaton Raleigh have submitted requests for 20mph zones some time ago and are currently being blocked by Devon County Council from achieving their aspiration of lower speeds and safer streets. The reason given is that the Newton Abbot pilot needs to be completed to inform policy and all requests for 20mph zones are deferred pending the completion of the trial.

I understand Cabinet agreed to progress the Newton Abbot trial some two years ago and is still in the pre-trial phase. Please will the Cabinet Member of Devon County Council:

- a. Agree to sign up to the UN's open letter recognizing the importance and urgency in achieving 20mph zones.
- b. Commit to implementing urgently 20mph zones where there is a stated aspiration on the part of communities for 20mph zones without delay including Ottery St Mary, Newton Poppleford, Otterton and Colaton Raleigh (rather than defer pending the results of the Newton Abbot pilot)

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

As you are aware the Authority is committed to reviewing its approach to the setting of speed limits and is receptive to the wider application of 20mph restrictions where there is shown to be benefit.

The Authority set up a Speed Limit Scrutiny Task Group who made a number of recommendations which were endorsed by Cabinet. One of those recommendations was the trial of a community wide default 20mph restriction in Newton Abbot. If this scheme delivers the benefits that many of us expect this will then inform our future Policy on the setting of 20mph restrictions. Officers and Members are currently developing the Newton Abbot Trial working with colleagues with specialisms in public health, road safety, air quality and sustainable travel. Along with community representatives and the Police.

This project is a huge undertaking both in terms of finance and officer time. We must ensure we understand the impact of the trial with appropriate data collected throughout the 1 year trial period, and we have asked that officers collate their findings and report on the trial within 6 months of the close of the trial period.

Whilst we expect the trial to provide a positive outcome, we cannot ignore the fact that we are seeking to learn from the trial and there may be learning points or unintended consequences to consider. Therefore we will not be rolling out any similar speed restrictions during the 18 month study period.

FOLLOW ON QUESTION AND RESPONSE

This can be heard from 24 mins and 50 seconds

https://devoncc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/565276

In essence I noted that there needed to be 'learning' from the Newton Abbot trial although I did not understand why at least some of the 'learning' could not be done from the 20mph zones closer to Newton Poppleford, Ottery St Mary, Colaton Raleigh and Otterton.

My supplementary question was that I wanted to know, bearing in mind 12 month trial and then the 6 months period for report preparation, when did Cllr Hughes realistically expect communities could have 20 mph given some communities have already been waiting quite some time.

Cllr Hughes' response was that we have a lot to learn from the data and, for instance, some communities want an increase speed limit but that once the trial has been completed then DCC will be in a better position to know when we can start rolling them out.

I feel frustrated that the Newton Abbot trial is resulting in a long delay for communities such as Newton Poppleford when there are already examples of 20mph zones closer to home eg Sidford and West Hill. My fear is that in reality it is going to be a very long time before the 20mph zones can actually be implemented.

NEWTON POPPLEFORD BRANCH SURGERY

I am very disappointed that Coleridge Medical Centre (CMC) is unwilling to send a representative to speak to the Parish Council and community about the potential closure of the branch surgery. The request by the Parish Council is a very reasonable one in the circumstances.

I really do feel that Parish Councillors and members of the public should have an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns on this important issue. So far, only a very limited number of people have been approached by the CMC with a survey questionnaire (those who used the branch surgery in the six months prior to the pandemic).

Given the wide-ranging implications of any potential closure as well as the potential boundary reconfiguration it seems to me that there does need to be more meaningful engagement on the part of CMC and a good starting point would be attending a meeting.

Cllr Jess Bailey

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