

Petitions Panel

Wednesday, 2 November 2016

1. Background to the Petition Scheme

- 1.1 The County Council’s Petitions Scheme was adopted on 29 April 2010 and came into effect on 15 June 2010. The Scheme was subsequently updated by the County Council on 21 July 2016.
- 1.2 If a petition is supported by 50 or more signatories then it will be dealt with by a small customer focussed panel. If a petition is supported by 1,000 or more signatories it will be scheduled for a debate at the next meeting of the full County Council.

2. Petition – Motcombe Community Safety Petition – “The Hollow”

- 2.1 The County Council received a petition organised by Richard Craigmile on 11 August 2016. This reads as follows:

This petition asks Dorset County Council to impose a reduced speed limit of 20 mph on the steep section of Motcombe Road known as The Hollow, where the road narrows to a single carriageway and where there is minimal visibility.

This reduced speed limit should be implemented along with improved signage and road surfacing, together with a review of speed limits on either side of The Hollow. This is necessary due to an increasing number of collisions.

- 2.2 As this petition contains more than 50 signatures, the Panel are invited to note and discuss this.
- 2.3 This discussion should conclude with a decision as to how to respond to the petition. This may include one or more of the following:
 - taking the action requested in the petition
 - considering the petition at a council meeting
 - holding an inquiry into the matter
 - undertaking research into the matter
 - holding a public meeting
 - holding a consultation
 - referring the petition for consideration by the council’s Audit and Governance Committee
 - calling a referendum
 - writing to the petition organiser setting out the Panel’s views about the request in the petition.

- 2.4 Alternatively, the Panel may determine a combination of the options above, or decide on another course of action as appropriate.

3. Context

- 3.1 The Hollow is a rural C class road to the east of the village of Motcombe. There are a series of bends at The Hollow with banked verges on either side of the road. The speed limit is national (60 mph).

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3.2 There are warning signs on both approaches to The Hollow informing road users that the road narrows ahead and is supported by a plate saying ‘Oncoming vehicles in middle of road’. Both of these signs are augmented by a SLOW road marking and edge lines begin from this point forwards throughout The Hollow.

3.3 There are several SLOW markings through The Hollow and carriageway edge lining is in place throughout. Due to the rural nature of the road and the limited width in certain areas of The Hollow there are no centre lines.

In the absence of centreline lining, edge lining is in place to both visually narrow the road to encourage lower speed and to raise drivers’ awareness of the road layout.

3.4 Earlier this year residents of Motcombe and the Parish Council contacted the Community Highways Team with concerns regarding safety at The Hollow. In recognition of these concerns of this several pieces of work were undertaken to improve the situation. The following works were completed:

- During the winter Highways cleaned out the gullies from Thane Lane to Frog Lane
- Damaged pipes were identified and fixed accordingly
- Drainage ‘grips’ and chambers were also cleared along the route.
- During the spring road markings were refreshed; SLOWs and edge lines.

The above works were well received and appeared to have address concerns at that time.

However, during the late spring there were several crashes at The Hollow and concerns were raised with the condition of the carriageway surface.

In response to these crashes a survey was undertaken by Highways and it was determined that the surface had deteriorated and was defective. As a result of this resurfacing works have been programmed to take place. Dates have not yet been confirmed but has been initially scheduled for completion between February and March 2017. This resurfacing work is likely to cost in the region of £60k.

Since recognising that the road surface had deteriorated, several ‘slippery road’ signs and ‘Temporary road surface signs have been erected at The Hollows:



The road surface deterioration was exaggerated by the drainage system becoming blocked. A natural spring is routed into the drainage gully system and the blockage resulted in a near constant flow of water on the carriageway.

Additional work is taking place to clear the drainage system at the same time that BT are completing maintenance work of their equipment in late August and early September.

At the time of writing this report no further crashes have been reported to Highways at The Hollow since the temporary warning signs were set up.

- 3.5 The speed limit at this section of road is currently national speed limit (60mph) although the layout of the road results in speeds notably lower than 60mph; this is based upon site observations.
- 3.6 As part of the discussions earlier this year with representatives of the Parish Council requests were made for a 20mph limit.

Officers considered the request and opinion was that a 20mph would not be suitable for The Hollow and that it does not meet criteria.

Speed limits should not be used to cover isolated sections of road/hazards. Speed management measures, including signing and lining should be considered in the first instance.

The Department for Transport (DfT Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits provides a brief description of a typical use of a 20mph in a rural area:

Fear of traffic can affect people’s quality of life in villages and it is self-evident that villages should have comparable speed limits to similar roads in urban areas. It is therefore government policy that a 30mph limit should be the norm through villages.

It may also be appropriate to consider 20 mph limits or zones in built-up village streets which are primarily residential in nature, or where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high. Such limits should not, however, be considered on roads with a strategic function or whether the movement of motor vehicles is the primary function.

The above statement regarding 20mph limits in rural areas do not lend themselves to The Hollow and would go against County Council policy on speed limits (appendix A) which reflects DfT guidance.

Using the above extract from the DfT Circular as well as County Council speed limit policy (appendix A) the existing 30mph speed limit that covers the approach to Motcombe Village to be appropriate.

The speed limit on Motcombe Lane to the east of The Hollow is national speed limit (60 mph). A reduction in the speed limit on this section of road is not felt to be appropriate and the nature of the road promotes reasonable speeds. It is accepted that a minority of vehicles will likely to be travelling at inappropriate speeds, however a reduced limit would not likely reduce the speeds of these vehicles.

Enforcement would likely be needed to promote compliance with a reduced limit and the DfT state that enforcement should not be relied upon. Due to the nature of this section of Motcombe Lane there are not likely to be suitable areas for enforcement equipment to be set up by Dorset Police and would not likely be supported.

- 3.7 Whilst it is felt that a speed limit of 20 mph at The Hollow would not be appropriate or meet criteria, officers agreed to look into the feasibility of installing new warning signs at The Hollow.

Plans were provided to a representative for Motcombe Parish Council on 13 June 2016 outline two proposals for new warning signs, see appendix B. Officers were informed that

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these proposals would be raised with the Parish Council. At the time of writing this report, no correspondence has been received from the Parish Council.

- 3.8 In summary it felt that the planned drainage and resurfacing work will address the safety concerns.

Replacing existing and additional warning signs within The Hollow could be an appropriate additional measure to the drainage and resurfacing works as outlined at appendix B.

The speed limits either side of The Hollow are felt to be appropriate based on the layout and nature of their use.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The Panel is invited to note the receipt of this petition and decide how to respond to it.

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September 2016