

# Beech Road Safety Working Group to PC Meeting 24 May 2021

1) BRSWG last met on 27 April 2021. The minutes of that meeting were sent to Parish Clerk.

2) As confirmed in my last report to the Parish Council, our report and relevant documents related to the safety audit was submitted to officers at Hampshire Highways. We heard on Friday 21 May 2021 that the Safety Audit team will be examining our proposals in "late May" and Ian Janes at Highways will endeavour to get back to us in "early June". These dates are worryingly vague and could be subject to delay but the targets dates outlined by Ian Janes are much earlier than we would have anticipated and that in itself is good news. Even better news is that Ian Janes and his colleagues have not rejected the proposals outright on engineering grounds, which is a tribute to the quality of our report and the detail contained in it. Also, the fact that HH is willing to pay for and sponsor the progress of our proposals through the safety audit process signifies that, though radical and using an approach not used previously in Hampshire, officers are willing to think outside the normal box. This willingness sends the strong signal that officers believe our scheme is valid, reflecting the fact that our proposals provide solutions to the genuine, long-running issue of pedestrians being unwilling to walk along the road when confronted by speeding vehicles, thus undermining the cohesion of the village because people are fearful about walking from one part of Beech to another.

One warning - it is quite possible that the Safety Audit team will request further information before agreeing to our proposals in principle. How far such an approach might delay approval would depend upon what information was requested and how quickly we could respond.

Another warning - once in-principle approval has been granted the safety audit will move to the next stage which will be a detailed examination of the proposals which will require further drawings and quite likely the expenditure of some money on a consultant who could provide the necessary drawings. So I am flagging up possible expenditure further down the road but how much might be involved would depend upon what HH requires and whether we can manage these requirements through existing resources.

3) With regard to the element of our solution which involves a footway across Forestry England land, there are two key facts to keep in mind:

- Where the footway now running across Seong Gi's land runs into Forestry England land, the gap between the new path and an existing path is some 15 metres and the entire footway that we would like to take across Forestry England land is only some 150 metres in length.

- If FE continues to refuse permission for us to create a link to the newly installed path across Seong Gi's land and the entrance to Bushy Leaze Woods, we believe we will be able to take a footpath alongside the road on HH land and already the vegetation has been marked for clearing. Consequently, it looks very likely that we will have a fall-back position in place. Crucially, the support of Hampshire Highways should enable us to increase pressure on Forestry England to help facilitate a footpath that more reflects the line of the path through Seong Gi's land. It is vital that both WG members and Parish Councillors coordinate any activities that involve discussion with Forestry England to ensure that messages are consistent and that the outcomes sought from FE are also consistent, both with the line developed above and with line presented to those impacted by or involved with the local development of a footpath.

4) In terms of engaging with the police we have now received at least four visits from enforcement officers using a handheld speed gun. At this point some 12 speeding drivers have received tickets and at least four others have been "offered words of advice". PS Jones has stated that the fact they are catching so many motorists in short, flying visits confirms that there is a continuing speeding problem and that "enforcement action will continue". Given the current levels of police engagement it is important that we avoid being seen to attack the police whose support we will almost certainly need when it comes to the introduction of a lower speed limit. Current policy is that reduced speed limits will only be introduced where speeds are already down at the level of the proposed lower limit. If our proposals are approved by HH and put into effect, speeds will come down because the carriageway will in effect have been narrowed. Continued enforcement will help drive down speeds too.

5) BRSWG is in touch with "20's Plenty for Us" which is organising seminars for willing campaigners. We intend to take advantage of such opportunities. This campaign group developed letters of approach to candidates at the recent local authority elections across the UK. It is now setting out to make contact with those who won seats. I have contacted Mark Kemp-Gee, our newly re-elected county councillor for Alton Rural asking him to support a review of the Hampshire policy on 20 mph zones. He was on post election holiday but has undertaken to get back to me this week with a considered response.

There may be grounds for hoping that Cllr Kemp-Gee will be able to source some funding opportunities within HCC.

6) It has been suggested that BRSWG has achieved nothing so far. This comment betrays a failure to understand the strategy adopted by the WG, particularly in light of the fact that previous efforts to bring a safer environment for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users have not produced the comprehensive solution that the village needs and requires. Our approach has been to take things step-by-careful-step so that each point at which our scheme might run into the sand is built upon a series of solid, if small, successes. The production and publication of our report plays the most important role in this strategy in that it provides the solid ground upon which all subsequent developments in our scheme will be based. Far from representing "nothing" the report will in future be shown to have provided the vital path to the

success of the scheme. Even if our proposals are initially rejected, the report will still provide a solid base for subsequent efforts to reach a comprehensive solution which BRSWG is setting out to deliver.

7) BRSWG is developing a communication strategy and action plan which will need the buy-in of Parish Councillors as well as those working on the group itself. As we move towards the outcome of the in-principle safety audit, we will need to observe a disciplined approach to ensure that the messages we send to our key audiences remain consistent, and that all public comments reinforce those messages.

Once agreed among the WG, we will send the draft messages Parish Councillors for agreement at the next meeting of the Parish Council. Once agreed by Parish Councillors it is absolutely vital that all those commenting in public do so in such a way as to reinforce and, crucially, not undermine those key messages.

8) We approached candidates for election for Alton Rural for support both for our objectives - see three bullet points below - and for a review of the current HCC policy on 20 mph.

- [Improve road safety in Beech for all road users and particularly for pedestrians and, as a result -](#)
- [Promote walking and other non-vehicle travel within the village, increasing the opportunity for physical exercise.](#)
- [Improve community cohesion, social interaction, recreation and health.](#)

We received very positive responses. Here are some examples:

**Mark Kemp-Gee - Conservative:** "Thanks for that (report), Sir Charles, and yes, very happy to align myself with those 3 bullet points. I look forward to you being able to move on to the more detailed design stage."

Charles Cockburn - BRSWG: "*Please will you commit to persuading your colleagues to review the current policy, with a view to: a) embracing Government policy to encourage walking and cycling and; b) to secure central Government funds to put the necessary infrastructure changes in place.*"

**Mark Kemp-Gee:** (Reply received after the election took place - MK-G was the candidate elected to serve for the Alton Rural division.) "[Just to say that I am on post-election leave in Cornwall at the moment and will be pleased to respond more fully on my return next week. I know you will agree that it deserves a considered reply.](#)"

CC awaits MK-G's considered response which is due in the week beginning 24 May 2021.

**Roland Richardson - Lib-Dem:** "[Firstly what a great report. Comprehensive and thorough. I have now had a chance to read it through and I admit I started by not liking the dropped curb variant, as I thought it could bring some danger to vehicles and especially bicycles. But I am convinced that actually it could be the best answer...Like you, I think it needs also to be a wider look at how best to share our roads throughout Hampshire, but let's not let other schemes delay or distract our focus.](#)

**Steve Hunt - Lib-Dem:** "[I was appalled at the decision by HCC to not have any more 20mph limits. The data they used did not even include Alton or the neighbourhood. I know that my Lib Dem colleagues who were on the previous HCC are opposed to this blinkered view of 20mph limits. I will certainly stand up for new 20mph limits where appropriate. In particular I believe that an absence of a footway would indicate greater speed restrictions are needed. I am in favour of 20mph limits in residential areas...Roland, I and Lib Dem candidates are very open to new traffic measures, such as 20mph limits that would make our roads safer.](#)"

**Laurent Coffre - Green Party:** "[I first would like to say how impressive your report is. It is a true testimony to the involvement of residents in the life of their community.](#)

[You will have guessed that the Green Party is a firm supporter of a root and branch review on the way we move around, from the use of non-polluting vehicles to the development of a coherent transport network that will bring walking and cycling back to the core of local policies. As such, I am only too happy to endorse the key objectives set out in your report.](#)

[With regards the 20mph speed limit issue which you mention, it is indeed disappointing that HCC would not even consider this initiative in the county due to their own misguided policies, but it is not surprising when we understand their on-going record on such issues as the environment and social cohesion. From where I stand, transport accounts for about 30% of greenhouse gas emissions and it is of the utmost importance that we tackle this by making sure alternative ways of moving around are safe and incentivised to be used. As such, in areas such as Beech, it certainly seems like a no-brainer and, should I be elected, I would certainly campaign for an overall review of HCC's policies on transport so that we can, not only address your issue, but treat the matter in a holistic fashion for the entire county."](#)

**Colin Brazier - Labour Party:** "[Thank you for your e-mail, I am certainly happy to consider your proposals in more detail should I be elected and I do think that a 20Mph limit is a good thing overall. Much of the media and political focus is on Cities , perhaps because there are more cars there, but in many ways it is even more important where there are no pavements and / or poor street lighting as in many rural areas and something which could \(and should\) be implemented relatively quickly.](#)"

**Sir Charles Cockburn Bt.**

Chair, Beech Road Safety Working Group  
24 May 2021